

- 48 -

CLAIMS

1. A crosslinked copolymer which is obtainable by polymerising a neutral diluent monomer or monomers, a zwitterionic monomer or monomers and a bifunctional or trifunctional crosslinking agent.

2. A copolymer according to claim 1 in which the diluent monomer is selected from alkyl (alk)acrylates, dialkylamino alkyl (alk)acrylates, alkyl (alk)acrylamides hydroxyalkyl (alk)acrylates, N-vinyl lactams, styrene, substituted styrene derivatives; and mixtures thereof.

3. A copolymer according to claim 2 in which the diluent monomer is selected from vinylpyrrolidone, 2-hydroxyethylmethacrylate, methylmethacrylate and mixtures thereof.

4. A copolymer according to any one of the preceding claims in which the zwitterionic comonomer or comonomers bears a centre of positive charge provided by a quaternary nitrogen atom.

5. A copolymer according to any one of the preceding claims which is obtainable by copolymerising a zwitterionic monomer of formula (I)



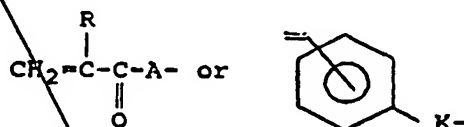
wherein B is a straight or branched alkylene, oxaalkylene or oligo-oxaalkylene chain or if X contains a carbon-carbon chain between B and the

- 49 -

zwitterionic group or if Y contains a terminal carbon atom,
a valence bond,

X is a zwitterionic group and

Y is an ethylenically unsaturated polymerisable
5 group selected from



wherein:

10

R is hydrogen or a C₁-C₄ alkyl group;

A is -O- or -NR¹- where R¹ is hydrogen or a C₁-C₄
alkyl group or R¹ is -B-X where B and X are as defined
above; and

15

K is a group -(CH₂)_pOC(O)-, -(CH₂)_pC(O)O-,
-(CH₂)_pOC(O)O-, -(CH₂)_pNR²-, -(CH₂)_pNR²C(O)-,
-(CH₂)_pC(O)NR²-, (CH₂)_pNR²C(O)O-, -(CH₂)_pOC(O)NR²-,
-(CH₂)_pNR²C(O)NR²- (in which the groups R² are the same or
different), -(CH₂)_pO-, -(CH₂)_pSO₃- or, optionally in a
combination with B, a valence bond, and p is from 1 to 12
and R² is hydrogen or a C₁-C₄ alkyl group.

20

6. A copolymer according to claim 5 in which B is
an alkylene group of formula -(CR³)₂a-, wherein the groups
-(CR³)₂- are the same or different, and in each group
-(CR³)₂- the groups R³ are the same or different and each
25 group R³ is hydrogen or C₁-C₄ alkyl, and a is from 1 to
12;

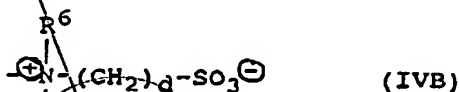
- 50 -

an oxaalkylene group such as alkoxyalkyl having 1
to 6 carbon atoms in each alkyl moiety,

an oligo-oxaalkylene group of formula
-[(CR⁴₂)_bO]_c(CR⁴₂)_b- where the groups -(CR⁴₂)- are the same
5 or different and in each group -(CR⁴₂)- the groups R⁴ are
the same or different and each group R⁴ is hydrogen or
C₁-C₄ alkyl, and b is 2 or 3 and c is from 2 to 11,

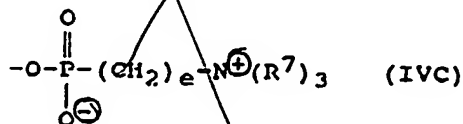
or if X contains a carbon-carbon chain between B
and the centre of positive charge, or if Y contains a
10 terminal carbon atom, a valence bond.

7. A copolymer according to claim 5 or 6 in
which X is a group of formula (IVB):



15 where the groups R⁶ are the same or different and each is
hydrogen or C₁-4 alkyl and d is from 2 to 4;

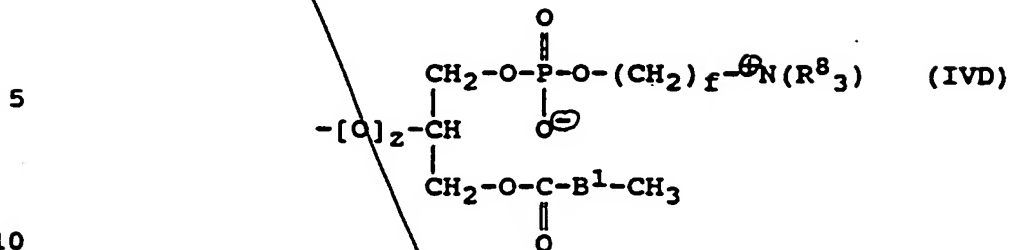
a group of formula (IVC):



20 where the groups R⁷ are the same or different and each is
hydrogen or C₁-4 alkyl, and e is from 1 to 4;

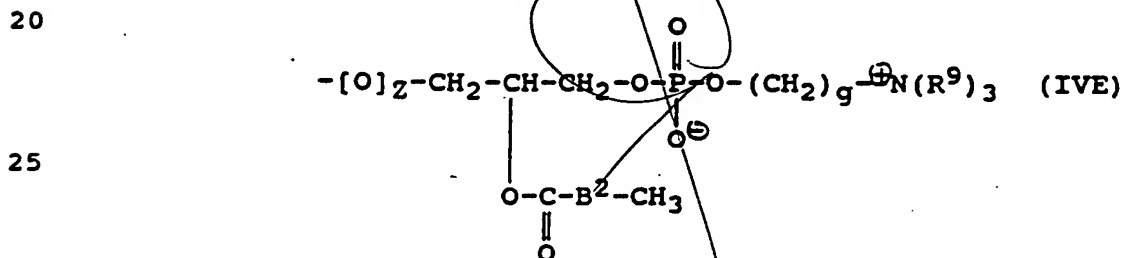
- 51 -

a group of formula (IVD):



wherein the groups R^8 are the same or different and each is hydrogen or C_{1-4} alkyl, B^1 is a valence bond or straight or branched alkylene, oxaalkylene or oligo-oxalkalkylene group, f is from 1 to 4 and if B is other than a valence bond, z is 1 and if B is a valence bond z is 0 if X is directly bonded to an oxygen or nitrogen atom and otherwise z is 1;

a group of formula (IVE):

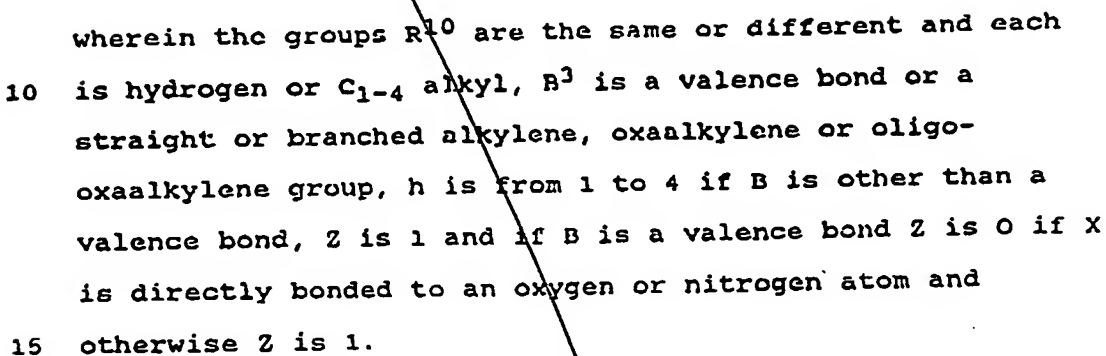


wherein the groups R^9 are the same or different and each is hydrogen or C_{1-4} alkyl, B^2 is a valence bond or a straight or branched alkylene, oxaalkylene or oligo-oxaalkylene group, g is from 1 to 4 and if B is other than a valence bond, z is 1 and if B is a valence bond z is 0 if X is directly bonded to an oxygen or nitrogen atom and otherwise z is 1; or

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a group of formula (IVF):



8. A copolymer according to claim 7 in which X is a group of formula (IVD), (IVE) or (IVF) and B¹, B² or B³ respectively contains up to 24 carbon atoms.

9. A copolymer according to claim 7 in which X is
20 a group of formula (IVB) or (IVC).

10. A copolymer according to claim 9, in which the group X is a group of formula (IVC).

11. A copolymer according to claim 10 wherein the groups R^7 are all methyl.

25 12. A copolymer according to claim 11 which comprises residues of 2(methacryloyloxy)ethyl-2'-(trimethylammonium)ethyl phosphate inner salt.

13. A contact lens material comprising a copolymer according to any one of claims 1 to 12.

- 53 -

14. A contact lens comprising a copolymer according to any one of claims 1 to 12 or a contact lens material according to claim 13.

15. A process for producing a copolymer claimed in
5 any one of claims 1 to 12 which comprises copolymerising a monomer composition comprising a diluent monomer or monomers, a comonomer or comonomers bearing a centre of permanent positive charge, and a monomer or monomers which will crosslink the resultant polymers.

10 16. Use of a copolymer according to any one of claims 1 to 12 or a contact lens material according to claim 13 in the production of a contact lens.

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